

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PYM RELEASES 65 DETAINEES

SUMMARY: NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY DECEMBER 20 RELEASED 65 DETAINEES INCLUDING ONLY TWO LOYALISTS. RELEASES AMOUNT TO ABOUT ONE-SEVENTH OF TOTAL DETAINEES AND OF REPUBLICANS AND LOYALISTS AS WELL RELEASEES INCLUDE SOME HELD SINCE AUGUST 1971 AND SOME FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS, SOME WHO HAVE RENOUNCED POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND SOME THOUGHT TO BE HARD-CORE PROVISIONALS. STATEMENT ANNOUNCING RELEASE LINKED FUTURE RELEASES, AND ULTIMATE END OF DETENTION, WITH BEHAVIOUR OF THOSE RELEASES, AND BEHAVIOUR OF THOSE RELEASED, SECURITY SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS. SDLP COMPLAINED NUMBER RELEASED WAS LESS THAN PARTY HAD EXPECTED AFTER SUNNINGDALE, BUT SEEM MOST UNLIKELY TO WITHDRAW FROM EXECUTIVE AND REPORTEDLY HOPE EVENTUALLY TO ABOLISH INTERNMENT THROUGH ALL-IRELAND IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION. OFFICIAL UNIONISTS CALLED RELEASES "AN ACT OF FAITH" TO WHICH SDLP AND SOUTHERN GOVERNMENT SHOULD RESPOND THROUGH POSITIVE MOVES. OTHER UNIONISTS/LOYALISTS WERE QUITE CRITICAL OF RELEASE OF SO MANY REPUBLICANS, AND/OR SO FEW LOYALISTS. END SUMMARY.

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1. NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY OF STATE FRANCIS PYM DECEMBER 20 ORDERED THE RELEASE OF 65 DETAINEES. RELEASE IS TAKING PLACE DECEMBER 20 AND 21.

2. STORMONT CASTLE SAID 65 MEN REPRESENTED A SEVENTH OF TOTAL NUMBER OF DETAINEES (NOT INCLUDING SOME 200 WHOSE CASES HAVE NOT YET COME BEFORE COMMISSIONERS AND WHO ARE DETAINED UNDER INTERIM CUSTODY ORDERS). ONLY TWO LOYALISTS WERE RELEASED, BUT STORMONT CASTLE SAID THIS WAS ONE SIXTH OF LOYALISTS DETAINED. OF REPUBLICANS RELEASED, SOME CAME FROM MAZE PRISON COMPOUND RESERVED FOR MEN WHO HAVE RENOUNCED POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND IRA (AND BY IT DUBBED "LEPER COLONY"), BUT OTHERS WERE FROM COMPOUND CONTAINING MEN WHO SECURITY AUTHORITIES REGARD AS HARD-CORE PROVISIONALS. SOME HAD BEEN DETAINED WITHOUT TRIAL SINCE AUGUST 1971, BUT OTHERS FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS. RELEASES REPRESENT FULFILLMENT OF FORMER NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY WHITELAW'S PROMISE, WHEN EXECUTIVE-DESIGNATE WAS FORMED, TO USE HIS STATUTORY POWERS TO RELEASE SOME DETAINEES BEFORE CHRISTMAS -- UNDERTAKING REPEATED IN SUNNINGDALE COMMUNIQUE.

3. AS SOME PRESS COMMENTATORS HAVE POINTED OUT, PYM'S STATEMENT REPEATEDLY LINKS ENDING OF DETENTION, NOT ONLY WITH SECURITY SITUATION, BUT ALSO WITH PROGRESS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. HMG DID NOT SEE UNDERTAKINGS OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR (WHICH PROVISIONALS NORMALLY REFUSE TO GIVE) AS CONDITION OF RELEASE, BUT STATEMENT MAKES CLEAR THAT BEHAVIOUR OF THOSE RELEASED WILL HAVE "CRUCIAL" EFFECT ON PROSPECT OF FUTURE RELEASES. HMG APPARENTLY HOPES THAT THOSE RELEASED WILL NOT RETURN TO VIOLENCE, AND THAT PROSPECT OF FURTHER RELEASES WILL TURN REPUBLICAN SYMPATHIZERS AGAINST IRA AND VIOLENCE.

4. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY JOHN DUFFY COMPLAINED THAT NUMBER OF RELEASES WAS "QUITE INADEQUATE" AND DID NOT IMPLEMENT CLEAR INTENTION OF SUNNINGDALE COMMUNIQUE. SDLP'S DISAPPOINTMENT WAS PROBABLY HEIGHTENED BY PREVIOUS RUMOUR THAT AS MANY AS 200 WOULD BE RELEASED. SDLP HAD MADE MOVEMENT TOWARD ENDING OF DETENTION A PRECONDITION OF ITS PARTICIPATION IN EXECUTIVE, AND PARTY CONFERENCE HAD ONCE AGAIN DENOUNCED DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL UNCLASSIFIED

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AS RECENTLY AS EARLY DECEMBER. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT SDLP WILL WITHDRAW FROM EXECUTIVE AS A RESULT OF ITS DISAPPOINTMENT OVER NUMBERS RELEASED. IN RECENT DAYS JOHN HUME HAS SUGGESTED THAT SUNNINGDALE COMMUNIQUE REFERENCE TO STUDY OF HOW HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION COULD BE APPLIED THROUGHOUT IRELAND OFFERS BEST PROSPECTS FOR NOT ONLY RELEASING INDIVIDUAL DETAINEES, BUT ENDING NEED FOR INTERNMENT ALTOGETHER. SDLP CAN CLAIM THAT IT IS ONLY POLITICAL ORGANIZATION WHICH

HAS ACTUALLY OBTAINED RELEASE OF ANY DETAINEES, AND THIS PROTECTS ITS FLANK AGAINST SELLOUT CHARGES FROM CATHOLIC/ REPUBLICAN CRITICS.

5. UNIONIST ASSEMBLY PARTY WHIPS LORD BROOKEBROUGH AND MAJOR HALL-THOMPSON WARILY CHARACTERIZED RELEASES AS "ANOTHER ACT OF FAITH ON THE PART OF THOSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WHO WANT TO SEE A RETURN TO EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT IN THE PROVINCE." NOW IT WAS UP TO SDLP TO DISAVOW RENT-RATE STRIKE AND SUPPORT SECURITY FORCES AND TO SOUTHERN GOVERNMENT TO HONOUR SPIRIT OF SUNNINGDALE. OTHER UNIONISTS AND LOYALISTS WERE QUITE CRITICAL OF RELEASES. NEWSLETTER JUXTAPOSED REPORTS ON RELEASE WITH PICTURES OF DECEMBER 20 PROVISIONAL IRA BOMBING OF BELFAST CITY CENTER AND REPORT OF DISSENT BY SENIOR OFFICERS OF SECURITY FORCES: VANGUARD LEADER WILLIAM CRAIG REITERATED OPPOSITION TO ANY RELEASES OF DETAINEES EXCEPT ON SECURITY GROUNDS. DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST LEADER REV PAISLEY PREDICTED 250 REPUBLICANS WOULD SOON BE RELEASED. UNPLEDGED UNIONIST JOHN TAYLOR SAID RELEASES WERE ACT OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY WHICH HAD REDUCED ULSTER POLITICS TO "ALLTIME LOW". UDA SAID RELEASE OF ONLY TWO LOYALISTS AS "DIABOLICAL INSULT."

6. ALLIANCE PARTY LEADER OLIVER NAPIER SAID THE LAST THING PROVISIONALS DESIRED WAS RELEASES, BECAUSE THEY USED EMOTIONAL REACTION TO DETENTION AS A POLITICAL WEAPON.
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